

*Washington Park Arboretum*

# BULLETIN



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The Washington Park Arboretum is managed cooperatively by the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and Seattle Parks and Recreation; the Arboretum Foundation is its major support organization.

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**ABOVE:** Visit the Arboretum this fall to see the brilliant foliage and waxy, striped bark of *Acer tegmentosum* 'Joe Witt', a variety named to honor a distinguished previous executive director. Read about more trees with remarkable bark beginning on page 18. (Photograph by Richie Steffen)

**ON THE COVER:** This portrait of a late-season garden border includes *Leycesteria* 'Golden Lanterns', *Canna* 'Tropicana®', *Dierama pulcherrimum* foliage, *Euphorbia* 'Jade Dragon', and *Lilium* 'Precious'. (Photograph by Riz Reyes)



# Harvest 2010

*H*ave you ever wondered what it would be like to eat only what you harvested? I have been curious about it for some time. Our ancestors certainly did it. What could I grow, forage, make? How hard would it be? What would I need to learn? Wouldn't it be an interesting experiment?

As I write, I am about to try it for one week. I will eat nothing I have not grown or foraged—except water from the tap. What will it mean? No oil for frying, no sugar for preserving, no flour for bread or pasta. And, worst of all—no wine. All summer long I have been getting ready for a late-August trial of my experiment.

I have a small vegetable garden and raspberries and blueberries in my backyard. My friend, Jan Drago, and I share a large p-patch with lots of vegetables and herbs. There are things to forage or harvest along our shores, in our parks, in the Arboretum. My world looked quite different as I pondered what food each place might provide. Potatoes from the backyard, fava beans found in the common area of the p-patch—each a great source of calories. Without oil or butter, how many ways are there to make potatoes interesting? How do I prepare fava beans—fresh or dry—neither of which I have ever eaten before? I turned to the Internet and began trying the recipes I found—training for my upcoming week.

Other items for my larder: summer squash, beets, Swiss chard, green beans, garlic, shallots (from the p-patch), snow peas (thank you,



cold summer weather), disappointingly few ripe tomatoes (oops, same weather), raspberries (frozen earlier in the season), blueberries, blackberries, mint (for tea), herbs and Sichuan pepper (from a tree in the Arboretum!)

Two items have been the most fun: salt and mussels. From the Web, I learned how to make salt from seawater. Then, I went down to Elliott Bay to get several gallons of seawater, and boiled and

baked it down to make sea salt. The precious three-dozen mussels were ones I harvested on a trip to my hometown on Long Island, then steamed and froze and carried back to Seattle in my hand luggage. But how would I keep them cold without being able to carry ice through airport security? Answer: I dumped the ice before entering the line and immediately post-security went to a restaurant to refill from their ice bucket.

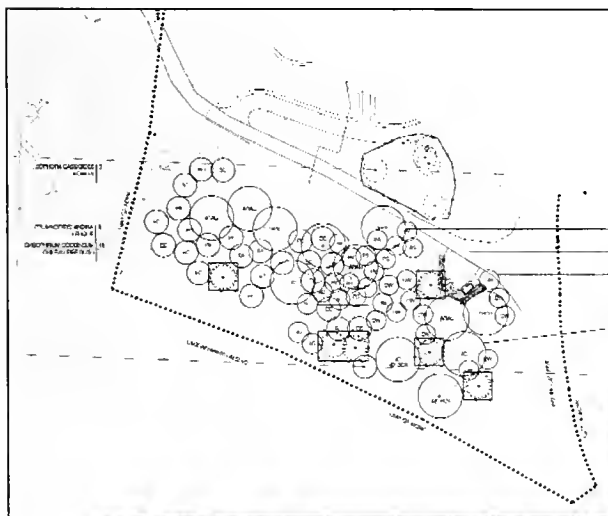
It has been so energizing to break my routine and re-imagine how to eat, if only for a week. I shared my progress each week, posting pictures and thoughts on my Facebook page. This weekend I finally will begin my “eating” week. I expect to be very hungry, but I hope my curiosity will carry me through. Thanks to all of you who have been giving me tips and encouraging me to try this fascinating adventure. ~

Cheers,

*Paige Miller*

Paige Miller, Executive Director,  
Arboretum Foundation

# Plants in the Arboretum's New Gateway to Chile Garden



*The Arboretum's Homdahl Rockery has been undergoing a major transformation—into the site of a new garden filled with prickly, glowing, fuzzy, scented and otherwise remarkable plants drawn from Chile's palette of native plants. Three plant experts, involved in creating the Arboretum's newest garden, showcase some of their favorites.*



## Cone-Shaped Blooms, Leather-Leaved Ramblers and Spiked Clubs

BY RICHIE STEFFEN

### *Gunnera tinctoria*

For any gardener, the first sighting of *Gunnera tinctoria* is a breathtaking experience. There is no other hardy plant that can rival the huge, umbrella-like foliage perched

atop its thick, prickly stems. With a surprisingly rough sandpaper texture, each leaf can reach over three feet across. The barbed stems look formidable, but the soft, somewhat-flexible thorns lack much bite. Anyone who has grown this plant will tell you that gunnera loves water and the moment it dries out, the foliage scorches into a brown and green mess. A fast grower, young plants can quickly reach four to five feet tall in a couple of years and—at maturity—leaves can top seven feet in height with a massive spread of 12 to 15 feet. Older

ABOVE: *Gunnera tinctoria* (Photograph by Richie Steffen)



plants will flower regularly with bizarre, cone-shaped blooms sprouting from the center. The cone is covered with hundreds of small flowers that will become tiny red berries, giving an interesting reddish-green color to the prehistoric-looking growth. The peeled stems are cooked and served as an odd rhubarb-like dessert in its native country.

### ***Hydrangea serratifolia***

Far removed from its common-blue, mop-headed cousins, the lustrous, deep-green foliage of this evergreen vine is hardly reminiscent of a hydrangea. The thick, leathery leaves—which are tough and tolerant—shake off the cold of winter and are unaffected by the frying heat of summer. Climbing hydrangeas do take some patience, however. They are slow to establish and slow to start flowering. New plants will often sulk the first year or two in the ground, but then take off in leaps and bounds, eventually becoming large and heavy vines. The first flowers may take five to seven years to appear and burst open from golf ball-like buds to reveal a dome-shaped bloom of hundreds of small, feathery, fertile flowers. *Hydrangea serratifolia* is a great rambler for use in covering

rockeries or the bare trunks of tall conifers.

### ***Puya chilensis***

The fascinating bromeliad relative *Puya chilensis* shows great potential for sheltered landscapes in the Pacific Northwest. The yucca-like rosettes slowly become a formidable clump of heavily armed foliage. Each slender, tapered, gray-green leaf is margined with sharp, hooked barbs ready to entangle the unwary gardener. The hooked leaves are so effective that in their native habitat animals regularly become trapped and die, their decaying remains providing the *Puya* with a rich nutrient resource. When mature, impressive flower stems reach six feet or more and are topped with a mass of flower buds that remind one of a spiked club. Hundreds of small, long-lasting tubular flowers gradually open to reveal a glorious shade of lime green.

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**RICHIE STEFFEN** is the curator for the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden. He builds and maintains the rare and unusual plant collections for the Miller Garden and works closely with the Great Plant Pick educational plant awards program.

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**ABOVE:** *Hydrangea serratifolia* covers the trunk of a tree (right) near the Chilean Central Valley's active volcano, Villarrica. (Photograph by Richie Steffen)



## White Bells, Clusters of Butterscotch-Gold and Saucy Orange Flowers

BY DANIEL J. HINKLEY

### *Abutilon vitifolium*

The so-called flowering maples are members of the Malvaceae, the plant family of hibiscus and hollyhocks. Primarily tropical in nature, the 150 or so species are found naturally occurring in both hemispheres on all continents.

*Abutilon vitifolium*, aptly named for its large, felted and lobed leaves, is a small tree or large shrub that is common in the mixed temperate forests of southern Chile. In the

Pacific Northwest, it is smothered in large, pale-lavender to white bells in late winter. Possessing the overall gestalt of a tropical plant, it never ceases to surprise those who encounter it in gardens for the first time.

### *Azara integrifolia*

The genus *Azara*, with about 10 species (all occurring in South America) is an aggregate of evergreen shrubs or small trees. Once classified in the Flacourtiaceae, it has recently been assigned to the family of willows, the Salicaceae.

Though *Azara microphylla* is the most readily encountered species in gardens in the Pacific Northwest, there are numerous other *Azaras* that perform admirably while possessing more of a floral punch. Whereas the flowers

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ABOVE: *Abutilon vitifolium* (Photograph by Daniel J. Hinkley)





**ABOVE:** *Azara integrifolia* (Photograph by Joy Spurr) **LOWER:** *Berberis trigona* (Photograph by Daniel J. Hinkley)

of *Azara microphylla* are quite insignificant, albeit powerfully fragrant, those of *Azara integrifolia* have a significant presence.

In mid- to late spring, amidst glossy, green leaves clad to stems rising to 15 feet, axillary clusters of butterscotch gold open to great visual effect. The *Azaras* are fast-growing and long-lived choices for Pacific Northwest gardens.

### ***Berberis trigona***

The genus *Berberis*, the barberries, is well represented throughout Chile and Argentina. Perhaps the most resplendent of all in flower is *Berberis trigona*. Once named *Berberis linearifolia*, its saucy, orange flowers appear along arching canes and deep-green foliage in late winter. It is rare in cultivation in its species form; however, hybrids between this species and *Berberis darwinii*—known as *Berberis x stenophylla*—have been popular in Europe for many years.

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**DANIEL J. HINKLEY** wears many hats as writer, lecturer, consultant, designer and plant explorer. He gardens at Windcliff in Indianola, Washington.

## Neon-Orange Ping Pong Balls, Fluffy Plumes and Dustings of Light Snow

BY RANDALL HITCHIN

### ***Buddleja globosa***

The genus *Buddleja* has gotten something of a black eye in recent years—and it's all the fault of just a single, invasive species, *Buddleja davidii*. To the surprise of many, this genus contains a variety of well-behaved and very worthwhile garden shrubs. Take for example the *palquin*, the vernacular name by which





*Buddleja globosa* is known in its native Chile. This 12- to 15-foot semi-evergreen is lacking in subtlety in all respects. Its very large, lance-shaped leaves are a dark, matte green above—a color that contrasts beautifully with the pale-buff, densely felted stems and undersurfaces of the foliage. At bloom time, the plant produces a branched, flowering structure that looks something like a TV antenna festooned with neon-orange ping pong balls. Subtle, like a train wreck. This is a shrub where placement makes all the difference: At close proximity, some might be tempted to describe the plant as “coarse.” However, with a little perspective, *Buddleja globosa* is at its glorious best. When seen at the back of a border or from a car passing by the Arboretum’s Gateway to Chile garden, “bold” and “exuberant” are the adjectives that easily leap to mind.

***Chusquea culeou* a.k.a. *chew-skē-ah coo-lee-u***

OK. Don’t be scared. Take my hand, and we’ll get through this together. In truth, the most frightening thing about this plant is its name: a strange combination of hard sounds, soft sounds and way too many vowels. Relax.



**ABOVE:** *Buddleja globosa* (Photograph by Richie Steffen) **RIGHT:** *Chusquea culeou* (Photograph by Randall Hitchin)



**LEFT:** *Eucryphia cordifolia*  
(Photograph by Richie Steffen)

Don't panic! Recall your phonics lessons from grade school and sound it out. See? Not so bad after all... So now that we're past that, the next thing that strikes fear into the hearts of many gardeners is the word "bamboo." But

fear not. In broad strokes, the bamboos are split into two groups: "clumpers" and "runners." And fortunately, *Chusquea culeou* is a clumper. So banish the notion of some giant grass careening through your garden, swallowing up all in its path. This is a bamboo with good garden manners, slowly forming a lush, dense plant to 15 feet high. But it's not just some homely lad with good breeding. Certainly not! *Chusquea culeou* is a dandy—a real pretty boy. As with all members of the genus *Chusquea*, this species has exceptionally dense

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branching, giving this plant a remarkably, fluffy, puffy, plume-y visual character that has earned it the common name Chilean feather bamboo. Add to that the beautiful colors of its culms ("stems" in bamboo-speak), that range from rich, emerald green to smoky, purple brown (depending on the form grown) and are set against brilliantly contrasting culm sheaths of straw or yellow. Homely indeed! Embrace the *Chusquea*—you have nothing to fear and much to love.

### ***Eucryphia cordifolia***

This is one of the most noble trees in the temperate rainforests of south-central Chile. From sea level up through mid-montane elevations, this dramatic evergreen forms broad, massive canopies that have earned it the Spanish vernacular name *ulmo*, a reference to the elms of the northern hemisphere. Valued throughout its native range, *Eucryphia cordi-*

*folia* is at the core of the Chilean honey industry and is the source of its premiere product, *miel de ulmo* or eucryphia honey. As an ornamental tree for mild climates, it has few equals. Jagged, lustrous, pleated foliage makes the tree a beautiful sight year round, but it is especially so in late summer—when the canopy is decorated with delicate, white flowers, as if dusted by a light snow. ♡

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**RANDALL HITCHIN** is plant collections manager for University of Washington Botanic Gardens. His fieldwork includes leadership of numerous seed-collecting expeditions throughout North America, rare plant monitoring in California, and two botanical expeditions to southern Chile. He has authored numerous articles on horticultural topics, many of which have been published in the "Bulletin."



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# Vietnamese Maples

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS

BY DANIEL J. HINKLEY



During the 25 years since I studied the Aceraceae at Washington Park Arboretum for my thesis, a staggering degree of taxonomic revision on the genus *Acer* has occurred. The opening of

China and the Indochine Peninsula, and novel means of chemical and genetic analysis, have dramatically advanced the knowledge we possess of this remarkable taxon of Northern Hemisphere trees.





**LEFT:** The burgundy-red fall foliage of *Acer tonkinense* var. *liquidambarifolium* stands out in a Vietnamese forest. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Fall foliage of *Acer campbellii* aff. *flabellatum* **LOWER RIGHT:** The decorative samaras of *Acer* aff. *pectinatum*

This is not to imply that it is a genus easily negotiated. For the 129, or so, species that exist worldwide, there are countless nomenclature landmines and a seemingly limitless inventory of synonyms. The treatment of *Acer* in the recent publication of the "Flora of China" has resulted in a major step in understanding the taxonomy of maples and their distribution throughout Asia.

Since 1999, I have spent considerable time in the mountains of northern Vietnam during eight separate forays. It borders China's Yunnan Province to the north, and numerous taxa of plants are shared by both countries. With that said, numerous plant taxa exist that are endemic to Vietnam proper, in particular to the highest peak of the Indochine Peninsula, Fan Xi Pan. This region rises to nearly 10,500 feet, and its steep and rugged terrain is comprised of both metamorphosed sediment and granitic intrusion; progress in the inventory of its flora and subscribing them to taxa already described has just begun.

### **Fan Xi Pan and *Acer campbellii* var. *flabellatum***

During my first visit to this area in 1999, access to the higher elevations of the mountain was difficult. Our trail started at 4500 feet and quickly plummeted into the steamy valleys 3000 feet below, before fording a river and quickly ascending through miles of ankle-biting *Miscanthus*. By the end of a very long day, our camp was still in the subtropics of 4900 feet.

The second day of the climb, after starts and stops, took us up one of the steepest bits of terrain I had ever experienced. Within three hours, my altimeter read 9190 feet, however it was already apparent that we were well within the range of hardy plants.

Here were growing a rich assemblage of familiar and hardy-plant genera; *Rhododendron*, *Viburnum*, *Sorbus*, *Schefflera* and *Abies*. Sensational specimens of *Acer campbellii* var. *flabellatum* were in splendid autumn color.

Taxonomically, this species is found in the section *Palmata*, or that of the Japanese maples. (Our native vine maple, *Acer circinnatum*, is the only member of this section to occur outside of Asia.) It is an imposing and handsome species in foliage, with broad, rounded seven- to nine-lobed leaves and short racemes of samara, along a rounded framework to 30 feet or slightly more.

The species occurs widely throughout the Himalayas, Yunnan Province, Laos and Northern Vietnam. Vietnamese taxonomists have referred to the tree that grows on Fan Xi Pan as its own variety, *Acer campbellii* var. *fansipanensis*, however there appear no valid characteristics to distinguish it from *Acer campbellii* var. *flabellatum*. It is a remarkably hardy tree in the greater Puget Sound region and worthy of cultivation.

As an aside, we also collected—in haste—seed of another maple in the vicinity of the second camp, under the moniker of *Acer campbellii*. Now in blossom in my garden, it is in the section *Macrantha* (that of the stripe-barked maples) with bold, five-lobed leaves and elegant, drooping racemes of red samara in midsummer.

### ***Acer oblongum* var. *concolor***

During our departure from the mountain that year, and in subsequent years while exploring its slopes, we encountered a sensational evergreen maple that creates specimens towering to 60 feet or more. Admittedly, for those who identify maple leaves only with the ones found on the Canadian flag, calling this tree an *Acer* might seem puzzling—unless, of course, the common nature of the infructescence was noted.

I had encountered this species at large during my time in eastern Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Though the oppositely paired foliage is often a dead give-away as to the identity of the genus *Acer*, there is the indubitable new growth—often a translucent, rose-red—that is its signature when sited in the field.



*Acer oblongum* var. *concolor*

Here, however, *Acer oblongum* var. *concolor* takes on a completely different dialect than the Himalayan forms of the species. The linear, unlobed and leathery, glossy-green leaves possess a startling undersurface of brilliant white. It is a highly seductive and admirably identifying trait while hiking the trails of this mountain, though, sadly, the tree has not proven hardy in the Pacific Northwest. Still, I attempt to cultivate this species in a container, as I find the foliage effects to be profoundly worthy of the attempt.

#### ***Acer tonkinense* var. *liquidambarifolium***

In 2006, I explored a region slightly to the north and east of the peaks of Fan Xi Pan that possesses a decidedly more alkaline habitat, with thrusting columns of weathered limestone preserving a unique flora from the ravages of feral livestock.

It was here that I first made my acquaintance with one of the most beautiful species of *Acer*, in foliage, I have ever encountered. To be perfectly honest, until I noted its opposite rather than alternate leaf arrangement, I believed that I had stumbled upon a remarkable species of *Lindera* or *Sassafras*. The three-lobed leaves are up to eight inches in length and take on a glistening, burgundy color in autumn.

Later identified as *Acer tonkinense* var. *liquidambarifolium*, this particular taxa seems a virtual minefield of taxonomy; it will be surprising if the name holds for long. Under any name, however, this small tree, to 20 feet or slightly more, might prove to be a lovely new addition to the Pacific Northwest landscape.

These are hardly the only maple species I have encountered while in the rich, forested slopes of a beautiful country. *Acer davidii* is



frequently encountered, as is a truly hardy evergreen maple known as *Acer erythranthrum*. Other dramatic maple species have been encountered at lower subtropical elevations, where their growth commences in early November.

From my days as a lad in the sugar bush of our family farm, and later within the collection of Washington Park Arboretum, and later still in my opportunities to encounter them

in their native lands, my association with and fondness for the genus *Acer* continues. ☞

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**DANIEL J. HINKLEY** is a well-known plant collector and a member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board. His latest book is "The Explorer's Garden: Shrubs and Vines from the Four Corners of the World." Portland OR: Timber Press, Inc., 2009.

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**ABOVE:** An undetermined, winter-growing species of maple found in the limestone karst of Vietnam on the border with Yunnan Province. **INSET:** *Acer oblangum* var. *concolor*



# Bioblitzing the Arboretum

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY PATRICK MULLIGAN

This past May, the Washington Park Arboretum hosted the first “Bioblitz” to take place in Seattle. “What’s a Bioblitz,” you ask? Simply put, it is a biological scavenger hunt that takes place over a 24-hour period, with the goal of identifying as many living organisms as possible in a given area. The given area, in this case, was the Arboretum’s north end—the area to be impacted by the SR-520 replacement project.

On the one hand, by doubling the width of the current bridge, the approved design will improve traffic conditions through this highly traveled corridor. On the other hand, this

doubling means less suitable habitat for Foster Island’s marshy residents, an increase in the amount of storm water run-off discharged into Lake Washington, and greater noise pollution. So the reason for the Bioblitz was two-fold: to satisfy our scientific curiosity; and, as Arboretum Foundation Director Paige Miller so eloquently told the Seattle Times, to “...make sure the state knows about the diversity we have and what’s at risk, to do what we can to prevent the harm.”

To that end, small teams of volunteers worked with specialists from various realms of biology, looking high and low for any and all

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A young Arboretum bio blitzer.





signs of life during three-hour shifts. I had the pleasure of participating on several teams during the event, and these are just a few of my highlights:

Under ominous, gray skies, our insect team of six set out with nets, jars and lengths of rubber tubing for siphoning up insects too small or fragile to grab with fingers. Our charismatic leader, Liam Stacey, from the University of Washington's School of Forest Resources, had us beating bushes and turning over logs, and it didn't take long to fill the jars we'd brought. Liam and others would be up into the wee hours of the night with dichotomous insect keys, microscopes and uncanny patience identifying what was collected. All told, over 150 different species of mostly crawling insects and spiders were counted on this unseasonably chilly weekend that kept the flying insects at bay.

With night fully set, "Science Central" (our temporary hub in the Graham Visitors Center Greenhouse) was abuzz with anticipation for the ensuing night hike. Two teams went out in hopes of spotting some of the Arboretum's nocturnal residents. I was paired with an owl enthusiast from Canada named Thomas Knight

and his posse of landscape designers known as the "Light Table Collective." Between the two of us, our attempted owl calls probably scared off most potential finds, and the forest was as quiet as a picture—until we heard them. A pair of barred owls, no doubt a very confused pair of barred owls, began "talking" back to us. The conversation went on and on, to the point of our becoming hoarse, until the owls moved on, swooping across the trail above our heads. It was a magical end to an exhausting day.

Saturday started early, and our small team of "birders-by-boat" was on the water by six a.m.

With the well-trained eyes and ears of Jenn Leach and George Ritchotte—both volunteers with Seattle Audubon—and the paddling power of others, we expanded the Bioblitz net to include the waters around Foster Island. We began along the shores of Duck Bay and continued under SR-520 to the open waters of Lake Washington, then returned through channels adjacent to Broadmoor Country Club to complete our circumnavigation. Along the way we saw nesting grebes, sneaking herons and flocks of fly-catchers, swallows and warblers too numerous to count. In addition to these avian residents, we came across two very substantial beaver lodges, whose occupants were confirmed by the mammal team. What struck me most about the experience was how well-tuned a birder's ears are to the songs of their quarry. In retrospect it seems quite obvious: Most birds try hard not to be seen but are



desperate to be heard. Seasoned birders know this well and use it to their advantage. All told, 56 species of birds were seen and heard over the course of the Bioblitz.

The last team I had the pleasure of working with was comprised of high school interns from the Mercer Slough Environmental Center. As interns, they have been trained to teach younger students about wetlands when they visit the Slough and, as such, are quite good at identifying aquatic insects. We attempted a stream survey along a short stretch of Arboretum Creek that drains Lake Washington Boulevard into Duck Bay, but access was made difficult by blackberries and thicket. Where we did manage to scoop, signs of life were few and restricted to only the hardiest of bottom-feeders, aquatic worms and leeches (the cockroaches of the water). As an environmental educator, I strive to not leave students on such a down note, so we relocated to a spot on Foster Island that was included in the restoration project of 2005—a spot where we often take students during fieldtrips to the Arboretum. The contrast surprised even me, as our scoops this time produced collection trays literally teeming with life, including mayfly nymphs that are indicative of healthy water.

This brings me to what I feel is the take-home lesson of the Bioblitz. Life, in one form or another, has existed on Earth for over three billion years and will no doubt continue to exist, in one form or another, for another three billion (with or without us). As the dominant species of our current time, with the power



to shape the world around us, we have a choice. We can continue with our efforts to conquer and tame the natural world and look forward to sharing our backyards with only the hardiest of the hardy (the cockroaches, blackberries and crows) or we can build upon a developing ethos that understands the win-win situation that arises when we consider more than just our own needs. The Bioblitz yielded over 400 total different species living in this highly urbanized environment. Now that we know they are there, we would do well to respect our neighbors and act responsibly in our daily lives to ensure their continued presence. ∞

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**PATRICK MULLIGAN** is the education and outreach supervisor at the Washington Park Arboretum. He oversees the school fieldtrips program, as well as the adult and family programs. He comes to us from the Norfolk Botanical Garden in Virginia and attended Islandwood and the University of Washington, where he received his master's degree in education.

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**ABOVE:** Chasing “bottom feeders” near Duck Bay.

# Remarkable BARK

A tree's leaves, flowers, fruits and berries change with the seasons, but its bark remains the same year-round. Four members of the "Bulletin's" Editorial Board discuss some of their favorite kinds of decorative bark.

## *Lagerstroemia*

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANINE ANDERSON

Even though there are only two *Lagerstroemia* (Crape myrtle) cultivars in the Arboretum's woody plant collection, these shrubs and small trees are coveted by area gardeners for their showy summer flowers; mottled, peeling bark; and—apropos to the season—exquisite fall color.

The recent popularity of Crape myrtle in the maritime Northwest most likely results from a hybridization program that began at the U.S. National Arboretum in the 1960s, when an ornamental cultivar of a species native to China and Korea (*Lagerstroemia indica* 'Pink Lace') was bred with a newly introduced species native to Japan (*L. fauriei*) and showed

improved resistance to powdery mildew and other diseases.

Among the first cultivars from this pairing was *Lagerstroemia* 'Natchez'. An Arboretum specimen obtained in 1974 is located near the Visitors Center between the parking lot and the southwest corner of the maintenance building to the north—a perfect site for a tree that thrives on summer heat. *Lagerstroemia* 'Natchez' has 6- to 12-inch-long panicles of white flowers from late June into September; mottled, exfoliating, cinnamon bark throughout the year; and glossy, green leaves that turn orange and red in fall. *L. 'Natchez'* reaches about 20 by 20 feet at maturity.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: *Lagerstroemia* 'Muskogee'







# Remarkable BARK

Another introduction, *Lagerstroemia* 'Muskogee', is planted in a grove of three south of the path leading from the Visitors Center to the Pinetum, shortly before it intersects Azalea Way. These multi-stemmed specimens are about the same height, but more upright in habit than *L.* 'Natchez', and have 4- to 10-inch-long panicles of lavender-pink flowers throughout the summer; light gray to tan, exfoliating bark; and glossy, green leaves with tones of red and yellow in autumn.

Other varieties of Crape myrtle, varying in size, form, bark, flower and fall color, are showcased in the east parking lot at the Center for Urban Horticulture, and many are available

in area nurseries. Throughout Seattle, Crape myrtle has become popular as a street tree—appropriately so, as such sunnier sites promote flowering.

Crape myrtle is worth considering if you have the sun and heat needed for flowering, but it can also be enjoyed year-round for its bark, form and fall foliage. Fall color peaks late—best to seek it out in early November.

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**JANINE ANDERSON**, CPH, is a landscape designer ([www.anderson-design.net](http://www.anderson-design.net)), long-time Arboretum guide and member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board.

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## *Betula albosinensis*

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPH BY PHIL WOOD

On a chill winter day, the glowing, pink bark of *Betula albosinensis* var. *septentrionalis*, the Chinese red birch, warms the spirit.

The species varies in bark color from dark-reddish brown, to tan, to light-pink beige with a white, waxy bloom. The variety *septentrionalis* is more likely to have the light pink color. To ensure that your tree will have the bark color you want, select one that is at least an inch or two in diameter.

The Washington Park Arboretum is a good place to see Chinese red birch. Some are at the south end of Azalea Way, planted in 1959. The Joseph Witt Winter Garden has a group of three *Betula albosinensis* var. *septentrionalis*

planted in 1988. The light, copper-pink trunks provide a good backdrop for the dark, peeling bark of the *Acer griseum* (paperbark maple) placed in front of them.

*Betula albosinensis* is native to southwest China. At maturity, the tree reaches 50 to 80 feet and spreads to 30 to 40 feet. Give it room; birches respond poorly to pruning. The exception is that the lower branches may be pruned, when young, to reveal the beautiful bark.

The tree will grow in a wide variety of soils, including water-saturated locations. The matte-green leaves turn golden in the fall. The open habit allows light to reach garden plantings underneath.



Chinese red birch will require some searching; it is not a common tree. Harnden's Nursery in Snohomish, (wholesale only and not open to the public) has the straight species, which is variable in bark color. Visit the nursery with your landscape professional to choose one. Forest Farm, a mail-order nursery in Oregon, carries the variety septentrionalis.

With catkins in the spring; fresh, green leaves in the summer; golden fall foliage and fabulous winter bark, Chinese red birch is a tree to enjoy all year.

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**PHIL WOOD** is a writer, garden designer and member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board.

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## Snakebark Maples

BY BETSY ANDERSON

The trunk and limbs of *Acer pensylvanicum*, when glimpsed in the dappled light of the garden, might seem more animal than plant. A vivid pattern of white stripes on apple green slithers along the length of the tree itself, and the scaly, waxy appearance of its bark is a reminder that this tree belongs to a distinctive group of species known as the snakebark maples. *Acer pensylvanicum*, also known as striped maple or moosewood, is the sole North American species in the section *Macrantha*, a group of fourteen maples that share its striated bark.

Moosewood is native to Northeastern hardwood forests, where it grows as an understory tree, and like all snakebark maples it will thrive in full sun to part shade. Its cousins hail from Asia, in a large range that extends from the Himalayas to Japan. Despite their distant origins, snakebark maples grow happily in Seattle's temperate climate and are especially stunning beneath a framework of Douglas fir,

or as an overstory planting for shade-loving shrubs.

Though bark is this group's claim to fame—rippling in green and white, and sometimes in crimson and white striations—many snakebark maples sport handsome fall foliage as well. The Japanese species *A. capillipes* and *A. rufrinerve* are perhaps best known for their dramatic autumn garb, varying from yellow to gold with orange and ruby tints.

The species described above can all be enjoyed year-round in the Washington Park Arboretum, along with many other maples of the *Macrantha* section. Look especially for *Acer tegmentosum* 'Joe Witt', an exceptional cultivar of the Manchurian striped maple that arrived at the Arboretum in 1949 and was named in honor of former curator Joseph Witt.

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**BETSY ANDERSON** is a writer and garden designer who lives in Seattle. Betsy also serves on the "Bulletin" Editorial Board.





**ABOVE:** *Betula albosinensis* **BELOW:** *Acer tegmentosum* (Photograph by Richie Steffens)

**INSET:** *Acer tegmentosum* (Photograph by Joy Spurr)



# Remarkable BARK



## *Maackia amurensis*

BY CHRISTINA PFEIFFER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOY SPURR

There is a tree you don't see every day. When it is noticed, most likely it's for the delicate cream-colored summer blooms. Step in close to view

those flowers and you also will encounter one of the more interesting bark patterns found on garden trees: intricate ridges of bark curling into loose, diamond shapes surrounding

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## Remarkable BARK

lighter-colored patches. The bronze-toned pattern is most striking on younger branches, becoming subtler on older trunks. Pronounced lenticels add golden accents. Straight, slender limbs slant up in a lovely vase form reminiscent of elm trees.

*Maackia amurensis*, a small shade tree with finely textured foliage that casts a light shade, typically matures in our region at less than 30 feet in height. This native of Manchuria and Korea is named for Russian naturalist Richard Maack. It is similar in appearance and closely related to the more widely planted American yellowwood tree, *Cladrastis kentukea*—another summer-blooming legume. But the bark of *Maackia* is more beautifully patterned than that of the yellowwood, and its wood is less brittle. Rugged in urban conditions, with no significant insect or disease issues—the *Maackia* prefers well-drained soil in a sunny position and is drought tolerant once established.

Mature specimens may be seen in the Legume area of Washington Park Arboretum (16-5E, 16-6E), east of Arboretum Drive near Rhododendron Glen. Several have been growing as street trees along South Jackson Street in Seattle's International District for over 30 years.

Its elegant form, modest stature and overall hardiness make *Maackia amurensis* a worthy choice for urban gardens and street-side planting. ~

**CHRISTINA PFEIFFER** is a horticulture consultant, ISA-certified arborist and former horticulturist at Washington Park Arboretum. She is a member of the "Bulletin" Editorial Board and co-author, with Mary Robson, of "Month-by-Month Gardening in Washington & Oregon," Cool Springs Press, 2005.



# Annual Review of New Books by Pacific Northwest Authors

BY BRIAN R. THOMAS

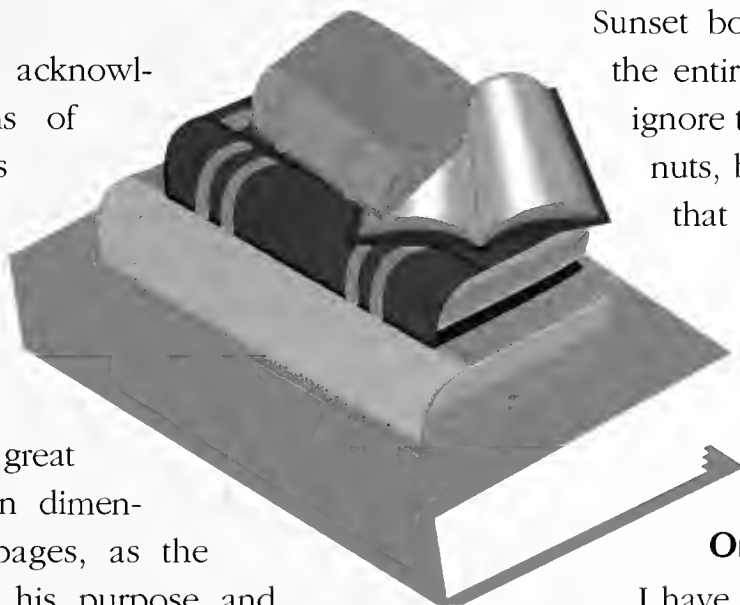
Welcome to the annual review. The list is long, so I'll dispense with preliminaries and simply urge you look for these at the Graham Visitors Center gift shop or the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.

## Edibles

Bill Thorness kindly acknowledges the contributions of the staff and collections of the Miller Library in his introduction, so I can't claim complete objectivity in reviewing his new book "Edible Heirlooms." But this is a great little book! Little only in dimensions and number of pages, as the author carefully defines his purpose and limits his scope, but within those parameters shows you how to grow an outstanding vegetable garden in the maritime Pacific Northwest.

Most importantly, he sees this endeavor as part of a larger picture. "The challenge for me is to somehow integrate my vegetable-growing practices into a diverse ecosystem and, if possible, enhance biodiversity." The key for this is to use heirloom varieties that can be re-grown from collected seeds. Besides the mouth-watering descriptions, you will also get an excellent history lesson.

For a more encyclopedic approach to vegetable gardening, consider the "Sunset Western Garden Book of Edibles." Like most



Sunset books, this encompasses the entire West in its scope, so ignore the entry on macadamia nuts, but with the fine-tuning that the Sunset zones allow, you can zero in on what will grow for you, including fruits, nuts, berries and herbs.

## Ornamentals

I have long enjoyed the folksy but information-packed annual catalogs from Gossler Farms Nursery in Springfield, Oregon. It is a great pleasure to now have the first book by the family (mom Marjory and sons Roger and Eric Gossler), "The Gossler Guide to the Best Hardy Shrubs." Here the very practical, learned-by-experience descriptions of the catalog are expanded to include 350 of their favorites shrubs, all of which would make good choices for local gardens.

The highlight of the introductory chapters is "How Not to Kill Your Plants," with lots of advice on how to select, buy, plant and nurture your new shrubby children. "Consider it an open adoption: You want to know about the birth parents, what neighborhood the plant



came from, whether drugs were involved, and so on.” This same professional insider’s advice continues in the A-Z listings, where I learned that a favorite of mine, *Enkianthus perulatus*, is rarely found in nurseries “...because it grows too slowly to be profitable.”

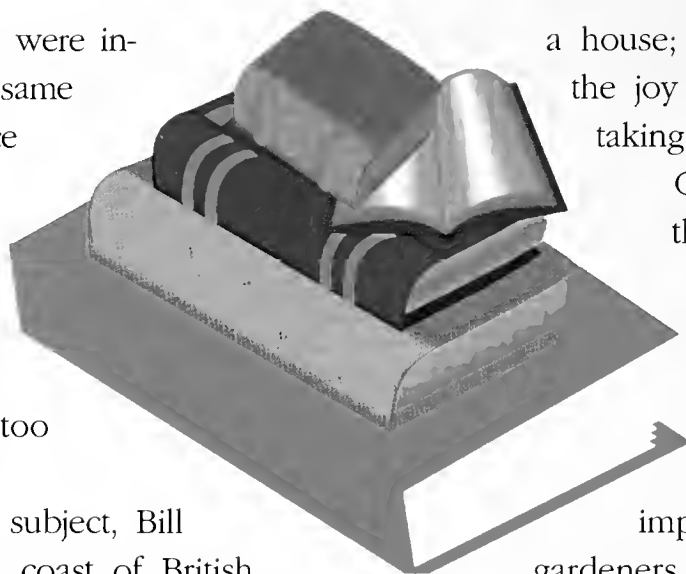
On a much narrower subject, Bill Terry, from the Sunshine coast of British Columbia, has filled a small book (“Blue Heaven”) with an ode of praise to *Meconopsis grandis*, the Himalayan blue poppy. His cultural advice encourages we favored few who live in a climate that will nurture this hard-to-please jewel, to grow it—along with some more easily managed companions, such as candelabra primulas and other poppies. Anyone living in any climate, however, can enjoy this display of plant passion at its highest level.

From Oregon, Timber Press editor-in-chief Tom Fischer has created his own book, “Perennial Companions,” that demonstrates 100 design combinations using herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses. I found it best to look at the right-hand, full-page photographs first (almost like a flip book), then stop at my favorites to read the interpretive material on the matching left-hand page.

The delightful “In Love with a Hillside Garden” has already been excerpted in the Winter 2010 issue of the “Bulletin.” Reading that chapter will convince you to buy the book; and by doing so, you’ll be supporting the Arboretum Foundation.

## Garden methods

Enjoy it. These final two words of the subtitle to Valerie Easton’s new book, “The NEW Low-Maintenance Garden” are the key to her message. Other low-maintenance manuals treat the garden as a bothersome necessity to having



a house; here the emphasis is on the joy of the garden, without it taking over your life.

Organized by broad themes, including “Design with Maintenance in Mind” and “Nature’s Rhythms,” Easton augments her points with interviews of an impressive list of designers, gardeners and home owners who

have created a successful outdoor space. She completes each chapter with a list of books and other resources (once a librarian...) and provides, throughout the text, oodles of tips for simplification. Best of all, Easton gives the “Type A” gardener permission to relax, and to find the pleasure of it all again.

Linda Chalker-Scott debunks many gardening practices that don’t work in “The Informed Gardener Blooms Again,” a sequel to her excellent “The Informed Gardener,” published in 2008. The format is very similar to the first book, built around a series of short chapters with Sherlock Holmesian titles (such as “The Myth of the Magic Bullet” and “The Myth of Nitrogen-nabbing Wood Chips”) that analyze horticultural fads and home remedies from an applied, scientific perspective. After a thorough discussion of the research, a helpful summary (“The Bottom Line”) follows, along with references to support her conclusions.

Chalker-Scott clearly has a passion for bringing science-based best practices to both home gardens and professional landscapes, as she also has edited and published “Sustainable Landscapes & Gardens: Good Science-Practical Application.” Divided into five separately bound units—all housed in a three-ring binder—this work has contributors from major universities throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The audience here could be either the home gardener or the professional who



designs, installs or maintains landscape plantings. The writing, while technical, is well edited for readability of the non-academic reader and teaches not only better horticulture, but also about the research process that generates this advice. The format is designed for easily added updates and additions, so this is likely to be an important reference for our region for a long time.

Several of the principals in the Chalker-Scott books are the core themes in "The Climate Conscious Gardener," the latest in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Guides for a Greener Planet. While most of the contributing authors live in the Northeast, one of the five chapters, "Turning Your Landscape into a Carbon Sink," was written by Arboretum Foundation staff member Niall Dunne. To give an objective perspective, I'll quote from a review in HortIdeas (published by Greg and Pat Williams in Gravel Switch, Kentucky—so no regional bias here): "Dunne's chapter alone is worth getting the book...with valuable information on numerous techniques for sequestering carbon in backyard gardens. Wouldn't it be great if amateurs throughout the U.S. could keep a really huge amount of carbon out of the atmosphere?"

"Greening Cities, Growing Communities" is a case study of community gardens in Seattle. Written by landscape architects, this book is an excellent tool for community garden supporters to use in making their case in a language that is understandable to urban planners and policy makers. For those of us already convinced, the breadth of activities at the profiled gardens will be surprising, and we could use this book as a unique travel guide to the Emerald City.

### **Field Guides for Specialists**

"Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest" is another in the fine series of Timber Press Field Guides. Like earlier works on wildflowers and insects, it's well designed to be a good field companion with a coated cover, a ruler on the

back, and frequently needed facts easily found on the inside covers.

Particularly good is the long introduction, which addresses subjects from the ecology of mushroom-fungi and the hazards of hunting in the Pacific Northwest, to "how to avoid becoming a poisoning statistic." Unlike many field guides, the text in the descriptive encyclopedia is in narrative form, rather than having set descriptive elements for each species. Not being a mushroom hunter, I can't vouch for the effectiveness of identification by this approach, but I found it enjoyable reading.

While there have been earlier guides to our regional mushrooms, "Sedges of the Pacific Northwest" is breaking new ground as "an illustrated guide to all 163 species, subspecies, and varieties in the genus *Carex* that occur in Oregon and Washington." According to Katie Murphy, manager of the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens, this book is far better than other floras at distinguishing between these often very similar species and fills a much-needed gap in the botanist's reference shelf.

### **History**

For a total change of pace, pick up Jack Nisbet's "The Collector." Although written in the third person, the storytelling is so good that it reads like a memoir by one of the most influential of the early plant explorers to our region. David Douglas was a keen observer of all things in the natural world, but especially the plant kingdom, and had a natural talent for the recording, collecting and preserving what he found. And what energy! From 1823 until his tragic death in 1834, Scotsman Douglas was almost constantly exploring the new world, risking many hazards of travels and meeting many interesting people in both academic and frontier life.

### **Briefly mentioned**

"Pacific Northwest Native Plant Habitat Garden Manual" is a short, loose-leaf bound

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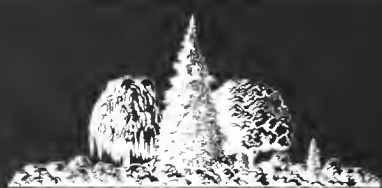
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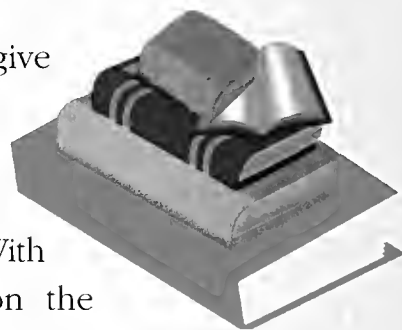
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notebook intended to give the basics for teachers and students establishing school gardens using natives. “Living With



Bugs” concentrates on the critters that find their way into your house, but there are valuable tips on co-existing for gardeners, too. “In My Nature: A Birder’s Year at the Montlake Fill” describes the wonderful bird life of the area also known as the Union Bay Natural Area at the Center for Urban Horticulture.

Finally, there have been new editions of important classics by Northwest authors, including “Macrolichens of the Pacific Northwest” and “Japanese Maples,” the latter by the late J. D. Vertrees of southern Oregon, now updated by the English chairman of the International Maple Society. To be complete, I will also include “The North American Guide to Common Poisonous Plants and Mushrooms” which—while intended for a continent-wide audience—was both written in 1991 and now updated by faculty at the University of Victoria. ~

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**BRIAN R. THOMPSON** is the manager and curator of the Elisabeth C. Miller Library, University of Washington Botanic Gardens and a member of the “Bulletin” Editorial Board.

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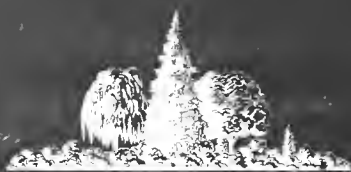
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